UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/ICEF/1993/7
16 February 1993

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
1993 session

FOR INFORMATION

PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT IN THE AMERICAS AND CARIBBEAN REGION

The present document reports on and analyses major new trends and developments in UNICEF programme cooperation in the Americas and Caribbean region during 1992.

The UNICEF regional office has responsibility for cooperation in the following countries and Territories: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, British Virgin Islands, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Montserrat, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, Uruguay and Venezuela.

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	THE REGIONAL CONTEXT	1 - 8	2
II.	STRATEGIC AND PROGRAMMATIC RESPONSES IN 1992	9 - 29	3
	A. Maintaining and strengthening political commitments for meeting the goals for children and development by the year 2000	10 - 16	3
	B. Mobilizing institutions and funding sources at national and international levels	17 - 24	5
	C. Information, communication and social mobilization	25 - 29	7
III.	PARTNERSHIP IN OPERATIONAL ASPECTS	30 - 42	8

93-09010 (E) 230393 260393

I. THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

1. In 1992, women in Latin America and the Caribbean played a leading role in the "birth of conscience", which affirms peaceful coexistence as the basis for human development, and earned for the region, as well as for all women in the world, the Nobel Peace Prize.

2. In general terms, the region's countries managed to survive the most acute manifestations of the crisis of the 1980s. Despite this, Brazil is still plagued by very high inflation, Peru is experiencing its fifth year of negative economic growth, per capita gross domestic product in Suriname continues to decline rapidly, Haiti flounders in isolation and misery and Cuba continues to suffer the consequences of the trade embargo and the virtual disappearance of its commercial exchange with the formerly centrally planned economies which, in their new situation, are not only demanding direct investment and official aid for their own development, but also competing in world markets against Latin America and the Caribbean.

3. In aggregate terms, the region is expected to grow by 2.4 per cent in 1992, a lower rate than the 3.5 per cent for 1991. Such growth, considerably slower than that of 1991, masks significant differences between countries and is marked by serious commercial and financial strains. In 1992, Barbados, Brazil, Haiti and Peru each experienced negative growth in gross national product. Between 1981 and 1991, the aggregate price variation for the region's principal export products was negative for 14 out of a total of 17. Foreign debt continues to loom large over the region. In 1991, the latest year for which information is available, the cost of servicing the debt came to $47 billion, more than 30 per cent of regional exports.

4. Despite renewed growth, it is estimated that by the end of the century between 4 million and 6 million more will be added to the region's present 195 million poor inhabitants. Thus, the high social costs of adjustment, persistent and prolonged periods of negative economic growth in certain countries, and political violence and environmental erosion, among other factors, all point to an increase in the number of the chronically poor and the indigent. In both cases, children are in the majority and the number of women is growing.

5. In 1992, investment levels have begun to give signs of recovery in most countries of the region, but the allocation of investment is still not directed to achieving positive social impact. As a result, a consensus is emerging that the accelerated economic growth of the 1970s and the widespread victory of democratic and pluralistic regimes in the 1980s, ought to reach a high point in the 1990s with significant social development; otherwise, the setback would be costly not only in political terms, but also in social and economic ones as well. Expressing this regional consensus, UNICEF stated in "The Children of the Americas" the inescapable need to promote redistributive social adjustment as a mechanism for settling the regional social debt, the most numerous creditors of which are the children and women of Latin America and the Caribbean.

6. The fundamental elements of social adjustment, as proposed by UNICEF, refer to surmounting the structural obstacles that jeopardize the viability of development and modernization in our societies. Once the region's economies have substantially reached macroeconomic equilibrium and initiated open-market and free-trade policies, their sustainability will depend on whether countries manage to achieve real and effective competitiveness, something that is possible only through human development.

7. Surely one of the principal structural distortions that must be eliminated is that although children represent the region's most valued resource, no other group in Latin America and the Caribbean suffers as massive, intense and growing poverty as do children. Thus, it is necessary to direct adjustment and social investment to substantially reduce the 900,000 deaths of children under five years old and the deaths of 28,000 mothers that occur each year in the region. This will avoid the wastage of resources and the social threat represented by 6 million children under five years old who suffer from moderate malnutrition and 1 million children who suffer from severe malnutrition; 88 million persons denied access to drinking water and 139 million without basic sanitary services; and 12 million children, as many as are born in the course of a year, not attending a school.

8. Thus, social adjustment should articulate economic and social policies through investment in physical and social infrastructure and improvement of the quality and content of services, according priority to the satisfaction of basic needs and to support for the most vulnerable social groups. Only in this way will it be possible to avoid handing down poverty from generation to generation.

II. STRATEGIC AND PROGRAMMATIC RESPONSES IN 1992

9. In order to create the best possible conditions for the effective application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the national programmes of action for children - all instruments to obtain the social adjustment that UNICEF is proposing for the region - three strategic initiatives will be further reinforced. The initiatives include: (a) maintaining political commitment at the highest level and with the broadest public support for goals for children for the year 2000; (b) operational involvement of the most important institutions and funding sources; and (c) support for social mobilization.

A. Maintaining and strengthening political commitments for meeting the goals for children and development by the year 2000

10. Latin American and Caribbean countries have shown themselves to be in the forefront in the commitment to design and adopt national programmes of action, accounting for 22 complete national programmes. In most cases, the plans were approved at the highest political levels, while high-level commissions consisting of ministries, decentralized public bodies and private institutions were charged with executing them. Among Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

countries there is a need to define goals for children that reflect Caribbean realities. Most global goals have been met, but the situation of children in areas of protection (children in especially difficult circumstances (CEDC), youth in crisis, child abuse, etc.) and development is precarious. Most Caribbean countries have yet to complete their national programmes of action.

11. The formulation and approval of national programmes of action are signs of compliance with the commitments made at the World Summit for Children (WSC) and express effective political will, ratified by the Ibero-American presidents on the occasion of their second conference. Such high-level commitments in each country were accompanied by concrete actions followed up at the "Latin American Meeting for the Evaluation of National Plans in Favour of Children", held in Mexico. There, representatives of Latin American Governments, recognizing the challenges of making the national programmes of action operational and funding them, published the "Tlatelolco Declaration in Favor of Children", emphasizing the urgent need to convert the national programmes of action into "social policy instruments and basic components of the strategy for the struggle against poverty and the reduction of social and cultural inequalities". As a follow-up to WSC, the Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee (ICC), comprised of representatives of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), as well as other cooperation institutions and presided over by the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), joined by government delegates and members of parliament from 28 countries, met in Brasilia, Brazil, to review the progress of national programmes of action, identify strategies to improve them and prepare work plans for 1992-1997.

12. In 1993, the Government of Colombia will convene an inter-American meeting to follow-up on national programmes of action and to prepare for a medium-term evaluation in 1995. UNICEF has been invited to provide support for coordinating this meeting as well as a regional preparatory meeting for the International Year of the Family, to be held in August 1993. In the first case, there will be close cooperation with the six agencies that comprise ICC, and in the second case with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

13. Mobilization activities in several Caribbean countries in support of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the meeting of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Lima, Peru, on the "International Defence of Children" are expressions of the political commitment of the region to support the Convention. In this connection, Bolivia approved the Code for Minors in December 1992. Ecuador developed a campaign for the elimination of maltreatment and violence against children. In 1993, Ecuador is also planning a children's story contest for Indian children, as well as a mobilization of children with regard to the Rights of the Child and environmental needs. In Central America, research on national legislation was conducted, seeking to make it compatible with the Convention. Support was provided to Belize, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala for the preparation of reports to the International Child Rights Committee and proposals on legislation concerning

the adoption of minors in light of the Convention also advanced. Sixteen countries presented their national reports to the Child Rights Committee in 1992.

14. Caribbean, Central American, Andean and other regional ministers of health have agreed in different forums on the need to consolidate targets for universal child immunization; to eradicate wild polio virus, an achievement well on its way to completion since the latest case was in September 1991; and to reduce infant mortality rates, maternal mortality rates, low-birth-weight rates and under-five malnutrition rates in line with the decade goals for children.

15. Particular attention was paid to parliaments at national and subregional levels. Thus, commitment and support of the Parlamento Andino, the Parlamento Centroamericano and of parliamentarians from the Caribbean were provided for specific programmes, for the implementation of national programmes of action and for the application of the Conventions on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW. In particular, two subregional parliaments began to promote the revision of national legislation with a gender perspective.

16. The establishment of three subregional women's office networks (South America; Central America, Mexico, Cuba and the Dominican Republic; and the English-speaking Caribbean) constitutes important support for a greater role of women's organizations in public policy, decentralization processes and programme support. The increasing interest in participating in this exercise by the First Ladies was supported, and it was possible to obtain their involvement in activities aimed at eliminating neonatal tetanus, preventing adolescent pregnancies, promoting the baby-friendly hospital initiative, stimulating the development of rural area women and addressing family violence in the region.

B. Mobilizing institutions and funding sources at national and international levels

17. A strategic concept for the region is to raise the profile of women and children on the political agenda of each country, incorporating their needs in national budgets, while at the same time obtaining more external credit and official support for development. In this context, through support for investment and social emergency funds in Central America, it was possible to direct increasing resources to finance priority social area programmes and to initiate the first subregional CEDC programme, which was partially funded by IDB. Likewise, in 1992, it was possible to finalize IDB funding for Basic Services for Children in the Andean Region (PROANDES), a basic services project for the poorest populations of five Andean countries.

18. In Jamaica, with the support of the Netherlands Committee for UNICEF, the first agreement for debt relief for children became operational. In Bolivia and Honduras, similar transactions are being prepared with the support of UNICEF and the Canadian and Netherlands National Committees. Possibly in 1993 Ecuador will begin a similar programme, and with this, debt relief for children acquires a greater dimension in the region.

19. With the support of the Special Adjustment Facility for Latin America and the Caribbean (SAFLAC) resources, work has gone forward with the social investment funds in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, where it was possible to mobilize considerable resources for depressed regions, municipalities and social sectors. In 1992, the Executive Board reviewed SAFLAC and expressed positive views about its operation. At the Board's request, a proposal for its continuation into the following triennium is being presented at the 1993 session.

20. In 1992 in Argentina, the World Bank approved a credit for $100 million to support the national programme of action. A substantive portion of this funding is to support the mother and child component. In the areas of education, health and nutrition, UNICEF also used World Bank credits in Ecuador and Bolivia to assist in financing the respective national programme of action components.

21. This growing experience, as well as the need to support social policy and human development, reached a high point with the possibility of establishing institutional agreements to give shape to cooperation between IDB and UNICEF and between UNDP and UNICEF in order to mobilize external resources of substantially greater magnitude than in the past. For example, the regional office, together with UNDP and the Regional Employment Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean (PREALC), is assisting in the preparation of the Forum on Social Reform and the Struggle Against Poverty, to be held under IDB auspices in February 1993. The Forum will constitute the political basis for IDB capital replenishment in 1994-1998.

22. The Brazilian example of private sector contributions in the form of goods and funds for children's services has now spread to other countries such as Argentina and Ecuador. This constitutes a strategic area of work for UNICEF in the future and a largely unexploited source of support for children.

23. In order to enrich the dialogue with fiscal authorities and orient investment patterns towards the human development perspective, the region, with support from UNICEF headquarters, has conducted a study on the "Public Provision and Regulation in the Social Sectors". Additionally, monographs on social expenditure were produced in seven countries. Together they confirm that social expenditure in the past decade was unable to counterbalance the negative effects of the debt and of macro-economic disequilibrium, making more acute the already existing problems in supplying and funding social sectors. Thus, correcting the system's inequities and inefficiencies means going beyond restructuring budgets to basic social reforms that transform public institutions and include the private sector in order to ensure an equitable distribution of benefits. There is growing consensus in the region on this conclusion, and this could make it possible to expect an increase in the resources to be allocated by multilateral credit organizations to the social sectors, especially for human development. The same held true of national resources. None the less, the modalities of social reform are still being debated.

24. Current agreements with ECLAC, the Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning, PREALC and a new one with the Latin American Demographic Centre will help to operationalize and mobilize resources for national

programmes of action, as well as strengthen training, research and follow-up activities concerning the goals in favour of children.

C. Information, communication and social mobilization

25. Social mobilization, information and communication continued to rank high among the components of UNICEF cooperation in the region. About 25 per cent of UNICEF financial resources were devoted to a wide range of activities in this area. These activities respond to strong media, communication and social organization capacities and opportunities in the region. They also capitalize on recent political and administrative changes that promote public participation, local government action, as well as a new role for the civil society in the context of a human development process. The corresponding strategies and actions are geared to achieving results in the areas of resource mobilization, political will, popular will and behaviour.

26. Resource mobilization under well-established slogans such as Criança Esperanza (Children are Hope) and Los Niños Primero (Children First), as well as effective partnerships with the media, continued to develop favourably in 1992. Interpersonal communication to further the development of political and popular will was used in many forms and forums, notably in subregional parliamentarian groups, a First Ladies' movement, governors' conferences and municipal-level mobilization. Television and radio reach a sizeable number of families in the region, many of whom are in priority groups for UNICEF cooperation. Collaboration with outstanding production organizations will result in two series focused on knowledge and changing behavioural patterns: Plaza Sésamo IV (a Sesame Street-like television programme for children) and a popular radio health encyclopaedia (based partly on Facts for Life for adults and adolescents). Regional, subregional and country-level alliances with the media through motivation, exchange of experiences and collaboration between countries are being encouraged with products such as "Children of the Americas" and the above-mentioned series. A meeting of television executives created the conditions for intercountry collaboration and is now leading to the creation of a Solidarity Network for Children. A well-established, subregional experience in journalism awards is being considered for broader geographical application.

27. Under the foregoing communication and mobilization criteria, UNICEF supported the viability, consistency and sustainability of national programmes of action. In 1992, work with bodies in the process of being decentralized was intensified. In this area, the initiative of "child-friendly" mayors is worth noting. Through it, efforts are being made to improve water supplies, environmental sanitation, urban basic services and CEDC programmes in the context of national programmes of action. These region-wide initiatives showed concrete advances in municipalities in Brazil, Colombia and Mexico. It is hoped that the effects of such actions will spread to other municipalities in other countries of the region owing to the encouragement to be provided by the international meeting of mayors that will be held in Mexico in 1993.

28. Work with the Catholic Church resulted in the inclusion of the child protection and development topics in the final documents of the 4th Latin American Episcopal Conference, as well as those referring to the need for the participation of women as prime subjects of the social development process.

Together with the Latin American Episcopal Council, research was conducted on child-rearing practices in eight countries. The results will be applied to the child pastoral programmes in the different countries and will serve as input for the communication and information strategies on family topics. In 1993, contacts and situation analyses will begin in several countries on programmes for children and women implemented by other church groups.

29. In some countries, the participation of different military and police units was arranged to aid in the basic tasks of universal immunization, and support was also provided for training these personnel in oral rehydration therapy (ORT). Additionally, there has been work with these units on the institutional changes that are required by the norms of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a field in which there was also an exchange of experiences between Chile and Honduras.

III. PARTNERSHIP IN OPERATIONAL ASPECTS

30. The set of above-mentioned strategic initiatives was carried out through maximum interaction with the wide range of agencies and institutions of the United Nations system, and with ever-closer relationships with the institutions of the inter-American system and other regional and subregional institutions, as well as NGOs and other institutions of the civilian society.

31. In this context, it is worth noting that the multi-agency agreement to support the execution and monitoring of national programmes of action, established in 1991 by UNICEF, PAHO/WHO, UNFPA and USAID, was extended to include IDB and the World Bank. The Executive Secretariat of this committee, managed by PAHO/WHO, already expressed its intention to mobilize ICC to prepare for the Inter-American Meeting to Follow-up NPAs, to be convened in October.

32. The mother- and baby-friendly hospital initiative unfolded in all countries in the perspective of an integral vision of child and family welfare. In addition to fostering the practice of exclusive breast-feeding in more than 70 hospitals, this initiative generated many support groups at the community level and the commitment of private milk product companies to stop the free distribution of their products at hospitals and welfare centres in the region as of the end of 1992.

33. Following commitments received at the Inter-Agency Conference on Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI), held in December 1991 in Washington, a regional strategy was devised, together with WHO, to support and promote national ARI control programmes. To this end, a regional meeting of national agencies for ARI programmes has already been planned and funded by PAHO and UNICEF for February 1993, at Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia.

34. The cholera epidemic spread to five more countries, bringing the total to 20. Despite the severity of this epidemic, owing in good part to advances in the use of ORT and the wider dissemination of oral rehydration salts, its already low fatality rate was reduced even further during the present year. Extensive expanded programme on immunization/cholera prevention activities at the local level were carried out in several countries. Furthermore, new

impetus was given to controlling diarrhoeal diseases, with the possibility of promoting, by 1994, an 80 per cent use of ORT, up from the present 54 per cent.

35. Within the institutional commitment of UNICEF to basic education for all, programmes were initiated to promote the improvement of the quality of education, as well as its efficiency, under viable financial arrangements and the reduction of repetition rates. Efforts were made to influence national programmes through participative methodologies, strengthening the countries' capacities for producing children's textbooks and instituting multi-grade strategies to reduce disparities, particularly in remote rural areas. There has been progress at both national and local levels in support of family-based and non-formal early childhood development approaches. With regard to adult education, priority was given to education for women, youths and parents, i.e. an intergenerational perspective having greater reach. In the English-speaking Caribbean, there is growing concern about the failure rates among boys at all levels of the education system.

36. During 1992, cooperation with other agencies was encouraged, for example in the Central American cooperation programme (UNICEF/World Bank/UNDP) in respect of the monitoring and evaluation of child-related goals. Region-wide implementation of a water supply and sanitation follow-up and evaluation system for each country was supported. To this end, the Second Regional Meeting on Water and Sanitation with Goals for the Year 2000, organized by PAHO and UNICEF, and attended by representatives of the Governments of 20 countries of the region, was held in Cuba.

37. As part of the efforts to establish a baseline to analyse the evolution of compliance with national programmes of action goals and to develop relevant indicators for monitoring their impact, agreements with ECLAC and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization were established; initial results are already available and will be distributed to the countries and institutions of the region in the coming year.

38. In 1992, projects were developed for the vulnerable inhabitants of border regions in the Andean countries, particularly the Venezuelan and Colombian border areas, as well as the Central American zone known as Trifimio, where El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala meet.

39. Since the change in its leadership in 1992, the regional office has defined for itself four broad areas of endeavour: (a) support for social policy, planning and evaluation; (b) human resource development; (c) support for priority programmes; and (d) social and financial mobilization. Together, these are expected to permit UNICEF to exercise effective leadership and strategic orientation in the region, keeping in view the conclusions of the multi-donor evaluation report on UNICEF.

40. The process of strengthening the new capacities of UNICEF in the region continued through granting the status of country offices to the sub-offices in Honduras and the Dominican Republic and the status of sub-office to the Paraguay liaison office, and also by the creation of a local office in Cochabamba, Bolivia, effective in 1994. The liaison office in Cuba was inaugurated in November 1992.

41. Change was the overriding characteristic with regard to staffing. In effect, the regional director, five representatives (for Barbados, Bolivia, Colombia, Haiti and Peru), as well as a delegate representative in Jamaica and a resident project officer in Cuba, all changed; one half of these posts are now occupied by women.

42. Within this framework, a process to reinforce human resources was encouraged. This includes broadening training activities through the six regional seminars on priority programming areas and permanent support to the offices in their personnel development activities. Another effort in this area was a recruitment mission to Latin America to identify suitable candidates for international positions, which was conducted jointly with headquarters.